



SOUTH SHORE COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL
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DANIEL SHANNON
PRESIDENT

LISA SPENCER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

March 22, 2022

Decas School Steering Committee
c/o Diane Kenney, Chair

Decas for Wareham
c/o Leslie Edwards Davis
8 Trinity Lane
Wareham, MA 02571

Dear Ms. Kenney & Ms. Edwards Davis:

On behalf of South Shore Community Action Council (SSCAC) and the many low income Wareham seniors, children, and families we serve, I am writing to express our continuing interest in and support for repurposing the Decas School for community uses that include Early Education and Child Care services for income eligible households. It is our understanding that the Council on Aging, Adult Education, a food pantry, and other vital Wareham service providers are also interested in utilizing space at the Decas School.

As a Community Action Agency dedicated to fighting poverty, SSCAC has provided Fuel Assistance, Weatherization and Heating System Repair and Replacement, Income Tax Assistance, Food Assistance, and Emergency Assistance for low-income Wareham residents for many years. In 2020, the federal Administration for Children and Families awarded SSCAC a grant to provide Head Start for 71 preschoolers and Early Head Start for 8 infants/toddlers from Wareham and Bourne. We currently lease space from the Oak Grove Cape Verdean Cultural Center located at 314 Onset Avenue in Wareham for our Head Start/Early Head Start programming. However, the space only allows for 3 classrooms and will be taken over for use in its entirety by the Oak Grove Cape Verdean Cultural Center in the next few years. Given regulatory limits on the number of children we can have in each classroom and our long-term commitment to providing Head Start/Early Head Start for Wareham's children and families, leasing space for only 3 classrooms at our current location is not a viable long-term solution for the needs of the community.

There is significant demand for early education and childcare in Wareham and many more could benefit from our Head Start/Early Head Start programs if we had more classroom space. We currently need to split one of our classrooms into a morning and an afternoon session to accommodate more families, however working families need full day childcare. If the town approves the repurposing of the Decas School and space becomes available, we could easily fill a 4th and 5th classroom (each full day). A 6th classroom could allow us to expand our programming to offer an after-school program for school-age children. Additionally, the potential for shared utilization of the commercial kitchen; gym space and auditorium are also compelling features the Decas School location could offer. With the Head Start/Early Head Start model grounded in providing comprehensive early education and supportive family services, our programming is fully aligned with the vision of repurposing the Decas School to be a hub for community services for all of Wareham's residents.

The expansion of our Early Education program to Wareham is a reflection of our commitment to improving the quality of life for Wareham's most vulnerable residents. We know the critical need for and

impact of comprehensive, locally accessible services for low-income individuals and families to overcome the many obstacles of poverty and become more financially stable. As such, we support the Decas Steering Committee's mission and the community repurposing strategy for the Decas School to provide the programming and services Wareham's residents deserve.

We look forward to working with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,



Lisa Spencer
Chief Executive Officer